A

SERMON,

Preached before the Univerſity of Dublin, &c.

TRINITY-COLLEGE, DUBLIN, *Dec.* 14th, 1776.

AT a Meeting of the Provoſt and Senior Fellows,

Preſent,

The PROVOST,

Doctor CLEMENT,
Doctor LELAND,
Doctor MURRAY,
Doctor WILSON.
Doctor KEARNEY,
Doctor DABZAC,
Doctor FORESAYETH,

RESOLVED, That the Thanks of this Board be given to Doctor LELAND, for his excellent Sermon preached Yeſterday in the College-Chapel, and that he be requeſted to print the ſame.

RICHARD MURRAY, D. D. Regiſter.

ST. ANNE's Veſtry, DUBLIN, *Dec.* 24th, 1776.

RESOLVED, That the Thanks of this Pariſh be given to the Reverend Doctor LELAND, for his excellent Sermon preached in the Church of St. ANNE's, on the 13th of this inſtant December, being the Day appointed by Proclamation for a general Faſt and Humiliation, and that he be requeſted to print the ſame.

Signed by Order,

THOMAS GRAHAM.

A 7

SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

694.l.8.
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UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN,

On FRIDAY the 13th of DECEMBER, 1776;

BEING THE

DAY APPOINTED BY AUTHORITY

FOR A

GENERAL FAST AND HUMILIATION.

By *THOMAS LELAND*, D.D.

Senior Fellow of TRINITY COLLEGE, and Vicar of ST. ANNE's, DUBLIN.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Provoſt and Senior Fellows of Trinity College, and of the Pariſhioners of S^t. Anne's;

In which Church it was alſo (for the moſt Part) delivered.

LONDON,

Printed for E. JOHNSTON;

and for N. CONANT (Succeſſor to Mr. WHISTON) in Fleet-Street.

M.DCC.LXXVII.

A

SERMON.

JUDGES, Chap. xxi. Ver. 2 and 3.

AND THE PEOPLE CAME TO THE HOUSE OF GOD, AND ABODE THERE TILL EVEN BEFORE GOD, AND LIFT UP THEIR VOICES AND WEPT SORE;

AND SAID, O LORD GOD OF ISRAEL! WHY IS THIS COME TO PASS IN ISRAEL, THAT THERE SHOULD BE THIS DAY, ONE TRIBE LACKING IN ISRAEL?

THE ſpectacle here preſented is intereſting and affecting. On this day, we may contemplate it with advantage, ſo as to receive inſtruction, when inſtruction ſeems moſt neceſſary, from thoſe things which "happened for examples," and were written for "our admonition." 1 Cor. x. 11.

A deſperate civil war, commenced between Iſrael and one offending tribe, had been carried on with mutual ſlaughter and various ſucceſs; and cloſed in the almoſt total exciſion of thoſe men, who had defied the authority of their national government. The people, however provoked at the offenders, however elated by ſucceſs, in the midſt of victory, looked back on the havoc they had made, in grief and conſternation. In the day of wrath, they had "marched through the land, "in indignation." Their weapons were red: but they ſoon reflected that it was in the blood of their countrymen and brethren. They were humbled, they were afflicted; they proclaimed a faſt; they lay proſtrate before the throne of mercy: with one voice, with one heart, they poured forth the effuſions of a relenting ſpirit. Too violently agitated to debate the juſtice of their quarrel, too deeply pierced to diſcuſs the occaſion, to condemn the authors, agents, or fomenters of it, they gave free courſe to their remorſe; they implored the divine aſſiſtance, to cloſe the public breach, to heal thoſe wounds their nation had now received, and to diſpoſe the hearts of all to peace and reconciliation.——Such was the concluſion of their civil ſtrife.

Hab. iii. 12.

I am not ſolicitous to draw any parallel to this detail. I uſe it merely as an occaſion to remind you, in general, of the preſent ſituation of our Iſrael; and to lead you to ſuch reflections, as may promote the purpoſe of thus aſſembling before God

God in prayer and humiliation; that in his great mercy he may heal our wounds, and avert the evils with which we are threatened.

We are at this day, not indeed at the concluſion, poſſibly but at the commencement of a civil war. It hath already proved far more obſtinate, far more afflicting and alarming, than at firſt our pride ſuffered us to ſuſpect: and from this "beginning of ſtrife" the moſt bitter waters have already guſhed out. One tribe, however divided from us by ſituation, yet of our own language and people, influenced, I do not ſay by what motives, hath avowed, and ſeems to glory in its ſeparation. In a conteſt, however raiſed and inflamed, the appeal hath been made to heaven; and the deciſion ſeems, even yet, by no means ſo compleat, as to afford good ground for confidence and ſecurity. It is not the buſineſs of the preſent hour, to ſpeculate on the cauſes and occaſions of this conteſt. In the time of our viſitation, we are to conſider only that we have been viſited. There is an inteſtine war; the empire is rent; men's paſſions are inflamed; their ſentiments various; their affections divided; the immediate ſtate of things alarming; the future proſpect melancholy; but one event deſirable, a ſpeedy and effectual reconcilement.

Prov. xxvii. 14.

It is not for the Chriſtian to be dazzled by the ſplendour of a bloody victory; to exult in the miſeries of unoffending

 thouſands,

thouſands, cruſhed by an unnatural and grievous conflict. It is not for the Chriſtian to flatter men's paſſions, to echo their
Jude 8. animoſities, to "ſpeak evil of dignities," or virulently of his fellow-ſubjects. When the ſword is drawn, he looketh up to that power, by whom it is appointed for chaſtiſement and terrour. His language is the pathetic language of the Pro-
Jer. xlvii. 6. phet: "O thou ſword of the Lord, how long ere thou be "quiet! Put thyſelf into thy ſcabbard, reſt, and be ſtill." His heart's deſire and prayer to God muſt be, that he who ruleth the hearts of princes, who giveth counſellors wiſdom, and reſtraineth the madneſs of the people, may ariſe and help us; aſſwage our animoſities, avert our dangers, ſheathe the weapon of the deſtroyer, and make us all to know and ſee the real happineſs of all, RECONCILIATION and PEACE.

Such, I truſt, are the impreſſions already formed in your minds. And when with ſuch impreſſions we come to the houſe of God, and abide before him, it is natural, and, alas! but too neceſſary to conſider, how we may render ourſelves leſs unworthy of the bleſſings we implore.

The principles of our holy religion are ſometimes repreſented as detaching us from all civil connections, and teaching us to look down with indifference on the concerns and intereſts of earthly communities. But the repreſentation is in-
Eph. iv. 20. jurious and falſe: for we "have not ſo learned Chriſt." Both the

the precepts and examples of his goſpel tend to form the moſt valuable and amiable citizen, as well as the faithful ſubject of our Lord's univerſal kingdom. As citizens as well as Chriſtians, ye are now aſſembled; ye are now exhorted; ye are entreated to conſider, ſeriouſly, deeply, and earneſtly, how our national dangers may be averted, and our national proſperity eſtabliſhed and ſecured.

But can we, ſecluded from the buſy and exalted ſcenes of life, can we contribute to the national proſperity?——My brethren! in all the events and viciſſitudes of this world, we are by no means to confine our regards to what are called ſecond cauſes. We are to elevate our hearts to the firſt Almighty Agent: to conſider the ſituations in which we may be found, as the appointments of his providence; as the voice of his wiſdom, directing and admoniſhing his creatures; as the voice of his mercy, deterring, entreating, and recalling them to his ſervice; and as the ſentence of his juſtice, rewarding their faithfulneſs, or chaſtiſing their tranſgreſſions.

At a time, then, when he hath permitted a ſpirit of diſcord to harraſs and confound us; when the ſmall cloud of calamity, which at firſt appeared in our untroubled ſky no greater than a man's hand, is ſpreading, blackening, and threatening; when the tongue of every man is whetted againſt his neighbour, and the weapon of every warriour lifted againſt his brother; when

we

Job xvi. 2. we have " miſerable comforters" to aſſure us, that the ſinews of our ſtrength are weakened, the ſources of our proſperity failing, and new enemies impatient to ariſe and ſeize the advantage of our diviſions; when theſe diviſions are violent;
Iſai. iii. 5. when on one ſide we hear, " the child behaveth himſelf fro-
" wardly againſt the antient, and the baſe againſt the honour-
Iſai. iii. 12. " able;" when on the other we are told, " O my people, they
" who lead thee, cauſe thee to err:"—At ſuch a time, if ever, and in ſuch alarming diſtraction, ſurely we ſhould aſk our conſciences, how have we merited theſe viſitations? We ſhould devoutly conſider, that national calamity can be averted only by national reformation; and that if men would be reconciled to each other, they muſt firſt be reconciled to God. Every member of ſociety is, therefore, bound to perform his part in this work of reformation; and to conſider the faithful diſcharge of his particular duty, as of the utmoſt conſequence to others, as well as to his own ſoul. In the day of battle every ſingle ſoldier hath his reſpective duty; and by diſcharging it, contributes to the general ſecurity, however inconſiderable his ſingle effort may appear. So in our ſpiritual warfare, Chriſt's faithful ſoldier and ſervant, in whatever ſtation, with whatever powers, not only ſecures to himſelf a glorious crown, but contributes his part to eſtabliſhing his Lord's kingdom, and ſubverting the dominion of Satan.

But what are the tranſgreſſions we are to forſake, as more eſpecially unfriendly to national proſperity?—Our own con-

ſciences inform us: our own hearts bear witneſs to our particular ſhare of that univerſal corruption, which when detailed from this place, the odious deſcription is too frequently regarded as the dictates of bigotry, or the moroſe language of a profeſſion.

Look up to the great and exalted of theſe nations. Are they worſhipers of God? Do they reverence his law? Are they influenced by the pure, diſintereſted, peaceful, and benevolent principles of the Goſpel? We judge no man. There is one who judgeth: who knoweth and ſeeth how far the example of a PIOUS PRINCE hath influenced all thoſe in authority under him; and how far the general profligacy muſt have extended, which hath taught the froward and the factious to deal this epithet to their prince in ſcorn.

Ye who have been converſant in any of the more elevated ſpheres of life, ſay, hath it not become faſhionable to pour contempt upon the national religion? to ſpeak of God's everlaſting word, as the word of errour, fraud, and ſuperſtition? to deride every principle but that of private intereſt, and ſelf-gratification? to confine the thoughts, deſires, and hopes, to the ſordid circle of this world? to liſten to the wretched babbler who calls this wiſdom; and to applaud the voice of ignorance, when it whiſpers this miſerable conſolation to the vitious,—' Ye are to lie down with the beaſts that periſh?'

Aſk

Aſk thoſe who have obſerved the prevailing manners of theſe nations, even down to the lower and vulgar orders. They will tell you of that diſſipated and voluptuous abuſe of time and fortune, inſolently called the Art of Living; of the inordinate cravings of vanity and ſenſuality, which fill the mouths of the reſtleſs with the brawlings of faction, or attach the ignorant and ſervile blindly to a party; the perverſion of every moral principle; the defiance of every decency in private life; the practice of faſhionable fraud, ſtiled elegant amuſement; the indulgence of revenge and pride that aſſumes the name of honour; the diſregard of religious ordinances, even among thoſe who do not openly renounce their faith; the wanton contempt of God's miniſters and their labours; the careleſſneſs and inattention even of the leaſt depraved; their indifference and inſenſibility to their immortal intereſts; their imitation of thoſe vanities which diſgrace their ſuperiours; their feveriſh thirſt of dangerous and contemptible pleaſures; their frivolous purſuits, their futile competitions, their childiſh engagements.

And of the manners of the vulgar, alas! we are daily witneſſes; of brutal cruelties unknown even among our corrupted neighbours; rapine and violence, and defiance of every ordinance human and divine; ſloth, and fraud, and beaſtly indulgences; and that hardened inſenſibility, which treats a ſolemn appeal to the ſearcher of hearts with hideous levity;

levity; and breaks the bonds of ſociety, by trampling on its great ſecurity, the obligation of a ſacred oath. God grant the tremendous enormity may not have ſpread beyond the vulgar! And God grant that it prove not a peculiar reproach to this very land!

And alas! this land, a land, which providence hath reſcued from barbariſm, from poverty, from miſeries of various kinds; where even we, of this generation, can trace the rapid progreſs of civility and proſperity, ſhould of all others (for its ſituation is diſtinguiſhable from that of all others) labour to be without reproach. Yet we might enumerate the exceſſes, follies, and corruptions, peculiarly our own. We might diſplay that pride and infatuated preſumption which have ſo often fought againſt our intereſts as a nation; the diviſions and factions we have maintained, under the falſe pretence of public ſpirit; which have really extinguiſhed all public ſpirit.

—But it is grievous to dwell on ſuch objects.—Yet, let me mention one vice, ſpread, countenanced, and favoured, in theſe nations. I mean the paſſion for cenſure and reviling, and the tremendous abuſe of liberty, for an occaſion to revenge and malice, inſolence, and pride, or perhaps ſome clandeſtine purpoſe of ſelf-intereſt. The period is in the memory of many among us, when this fury burſt from its uſual conceal-

ments, and raiſed the head with undiſguiſed impudence.—We know that its virulence hath been ſhed on every character, even the moſt exalted. In the elevated ſcenes of life, in the diſcuſſion of public conduct and public characters, we are told that ſuch offences muſt come. But we know that in inferior diſtricts and communities, the odious and contemptible have awkwardly imitated this licence; and that ſcarcely in any retirement, can the moſt unoffending be aſſured of enjoying the peace of private life, or the honeſt diſcharge of his ſocial duties, when there are vehicles to convey to public view, the wantonneſs or malice of any one man who wiſhes to diſturb his peace.—I aſk not why the vigour of government hath not been exerted to cruſh theſe ſerpents. I enquire not into the propriety of thoſe maxims or modes of policy, by which they have been ſuffered to exhauſt their own venom: till the indiſcriminate rage of cenſure hath, at length, deprived it of its ſting; and the innocent and guilty alike are taught to deſpiſe the impotence of its hiſſings.

With theſe and many other marks of national corruption, is it for us, to rely confidently on the arm of fleſh? Is it for us to look up to the God of Hoſts, whom we have defied and forſaken? We contend, you ſay, with the diſloyal and rebellious. But the diſloyal and rebellious may be made dreadful inſtruments of God's wrath. But we have been hitherto victorious. Wretched is the triumph, which ſhould

end

and at laſt in the remorſe of the united tribes of Iſrael, when, proſtrating themſelves before God, they "lift up their voices "and wept ſore." And is it a ſmall thing that we contend with thoſe who are ſaid to be ſober and devout; and, with their weapons in their hands, to have "the praiſes of the "Lord in their mouths?" Theſe, you ſay, are hypocritical appearances. Then will God, who trieth our thoughts, condemn the hypocrites. But woe to the ſinful creature who judgeth of the ſincerity of others, by his own heart! and woe to the wretched politician, who conſidereth not the alarming influence even of a form of godlineſs!

Pſal. cxlix. 6.

If then we hope that God will yet be gracious, and grant us the ineſtimable bleſſing of peace, let us inſtantly diveſt ourſelves of every vain notion of our conſequence, of our might, of the weakneſs and perverſeneſs of our gainſayers, or of the juſtice of our cauſe. Let the children of this world truſt in ſuch imaginations: but let us lay a ſure foundation for our hope, by returning to him, from whom we have "deeply "revolted." For whatever he may decree for us as a collective body, thus only can every individual among us "flee "from the wrath to come." Let us, in the firſt place, learn to "fear God," and labour to revive the energy of religion in our own breaſts, to cheriſh and diffuſe its vital ſpirit. It is the "pearl of great price," which not only far outweighs every other principle moral or ſocial, but contains in it all

Iſai. xxxi. 6.

Matth. iii. 7.

Prov. ii. 17.

Matth. xiii. 46.

that is valuable and praiſe-worthy in a man or a citizen. Let it once poſſeſs the mind, and become the ruling principle of conduct, and we ſhall need no exhortations to juſtice, equity, and charity, to peace, benevolence, and candour. It will harmonize our diſorders, and render all our actions, counſels, and devices, gracious and comfortable to thoſe around us. It will teach us (if there be need of ſuch inſtruction) to " honour the king," to pray earneſtly that the wiſdom from above may guide him, and the ſhield of the
Pſal. lxiv. 2. Almighty protect him from the " ſecret council of the wicked, " and the inſurrection of the workers of iniquity," whereſoever they may be found. It will diſpoſe us to ſubmit chearfully and reverendly to his conſtitutional authority, and to whomſoever it may be delegated: not toſſed about by every wind of clamour or diſcontent; but adhering ſteadily to that ſyſtem of ſupreme power, which providence hath eſtabliſhed
Iſai. iii. 3. among us as our " ſtay and our ſtaff," and to reſt gladly on the ſure baſis of our freedom and our happineſs. For we muſt not be inattentive to the precept of the wiſe man:
Prov. xxiv. 21. " Meddle not with them that are given to change." Beware of every buſy agent of faction and innovation, of thoſe who ſpeak evil not only of our rulers, but of our government; who ſpurn at ſubordination, and call obedience ſlavery; of thoſe who have imbibed their portion of that republican ſpirit which is ſaid to have ariſen among us; for it is a ſpirit utterly

unfriendly to that very liberty, whoſe cauſe it affects to eſpouſe.

Theſe things, perhaps, ſhould be diſplayed with more extent, and urged with greater force. But I ſtand before men who are of the number of thoſe "Scribes inſtructed unto the "kingdom of heaven," that from their own treaſures can bring forth things fitted for edification. They need not be reminded, that HERE, every the leaſt trace of corruption muſt appear doubly odious, and every degree of depravity load us with tenfold guilt: but that every good word and work ſhould iſſue from this place, as its proper center, to illuminate, to comfort, to adorn, and to improve the land. Matth. xiii. 52.

As to thoſe of fewer years and leſs experience, they, I truſt, will receive the word of exhortation gladly. They cannot be inſenſible to thoſe events which affect the public welfare. They can already judge of their influence and conſequence. They have already learned what it is that "exalteth a nation;" and what is "the reproach," and the deſtruction of "any "people." And at their time of life, if ever, public ſpirit, and a love of their country, are principles fervent in ingenuous minds. On this day, we addreſs ourſelves to theſe principles; we are pleading for our brethren and fellow-citizens, for that empire in whoſe boſom we are protected, for every member in its extended circuit; for parents, kinſmen, Prov. iii. 34.

friends,

friends, the riſing age, and every future generation. In the name of every tender charity, of every endearing connection, we entreat you to approve yourſelves real lovers of your country: to habituate yourſelves, even in this place, to rational obedience, and ſubmiſſion; to conſider ſeriouſly what courſe of conduct befits your nurture; to labour meekly and diligently for that knowledge, which may enable you to diſcern the true intereſts of ſociety, and for thoſe virtuous principles, which may make you zealous in the proſecution of them. So, by your inſtructions and admonitions, by your influence and examples, ye ſhall hereafter prove happy inſtruments in the hands of providence, of directing, perſuading, reſtraining, and reforming thoſe around you. And ſo ſhall ye do your part faithfully to turn aſide the wrath of the Almighty from yourſelves and from your country.

And would to God! that every offending creature would ſuffer the terrors of the Lord to ſink deep into his heart! that on this day, the great and the exalted, the lowly and obſcure, the proud, and ſenſual, and ſelfiſh, and inſenſible, the preſumptuous ſcorner, the affecter of ſpeculation, and darkener of "counſel by words without knowledge," the heedleſs, the debaſed, and brutal, were all alike ſeriouſly and feelingly humbled before God, and awakened to a ſenſe of thoſe glorious and momentous purpoſes, for which we were created and redeemed!

Job xxxviii. 2.

Thus only may we hope that God will ſay to our preſent adverſaries,—" Ye have not hearkened unto me in proclaim- Jer. xxxiv.
" ing liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to 17.
" his neighbour." No! nor is there any other reaſonable ground of aſſurance, that the meaſure of our iniquities is not, at this hour, full; that the operations of God's avenging providence are not already evident; and that he hath not choſen another people, and another land, to plant his name and worſhip there.

If then ye would not " fear their fear" who have ariſen, or may ariſe againſt us; hearken to the voice of the Prophet. " Sanctify the Lord of Hoſts himſelf, and let Him be your Iſai. viii.
" fear, and Him be your dread."—Or if, with hearts of 12, 13.
brethren, we lament the loſs of one tribe, it is the ardour of our repentance, the ſincerity of our amendment, and the mercy of the Almighty, which can bind up our wounds, and reſtore us once again to UNION, AMITY, and PEACE.

Grant this, thou God of mercy, who haſt ſpared us in the midſt of our offences! let thy gracious ſpirit deſcend into our hearts in this the hour of our humiliation; that the ſacrifice of theſe nations may be acceptable in thy ſight; and that we may be effectually moved to an humble acknowledgement

ledgement of thy goodneſs, our ſole reliance; and to the habitual practice of holineſs and righteouſneſs, our true happineſs; through Chriſt our Lord!

FINIS.